Pfeiffer Judith (ed.),
Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th Century Tabriz.

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The Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258 removed the centralized political power represented, at least nominally, by the figure of the Abbasid Caliph. The newly arrived nomads triggered a process of decentralization of the administration and rule that affected the conquered territories and the areas around it. As the areas of political relevance and economic wealth diversified, cultural and intellectual production also moved in different directions. Baghdad, which still held an important position as a centre of cultural activity, was joined in this role by cities such as Konya, Herat, Tabriz, Cairo, Damascus and Samarkand in a period of extraordinary intellectual production, which is represented, for example, in the amount and quality of Islamic manuscripts from this period that have survived. However, as Judith Pfeiffer rightly points out in her introduction to the volume (p. 3), only a tiny amount of research has been carried out on this material, leaving a gap in the scholarship of the cultural history of the region. The present volume attempts to change this tendency by exploring the relation between politics, patronage and intellectual production in thirteenth- to fifteenth-century Tabriz.

The volume is arranged in three parts. While the first two deal mostly with relevant personalities and literary works, the last part provides us with more contextualized information on the economic and artistic development of Tabriz from the Mongol conquest up to the Aqquyunlu domination in the fifteenth century. The volume begins with an article by Reuven Amitai that explores the relationship between Hülegü (d. 1265) and "wise men" (religious scholars, astrologers, magicians or miracle-workers) in the context of the royal *ordo* that dwelt in and around in the surroundings of Tabriz. The second article by Devin DeWeese explores the life of the Sufi 'Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī (d. 1336) in the context of his service in the Mongol court under Arghun Ilkhan (r. 1284-1291). Both of these articles focus their attention on the interaction between intellectuals and the Mongol court in the thirteenth century, depicting in turn a multi-faith and syncretic religious environment present at the Ilkhanid court. However, Judith Pfeiffer's article in this section aims to show that this multi-religious environment was not the only possible scenario in the Mongol court, and in the case of twelver Shi'a groups, there was a compact and homogeneous approach from this group towards the Mongols, whereby attempted to gain the favour and support of the Mongols in the major cities of the Ilkhanate. The remaining article in this initial section explores the emergence of Tabriz as a centre for the production Persian poetry vis-à-vis the cultural predominance of Shiraz at the turn of the fourteenth century. Domenico Ingento explores the literary competition between these two important cities in Mongol-dominated Iran by examining the "literary reciprocity" between the works of Humān Tabrīzī and Sa'dī Šīrāzī.

While the first part of the book deals with the intellectual production and learned men in the area of Tabriz, the second focuses on aspects of the transmission of the knowledge produced by these men. The first article in the second part is a study by Birgitt Hoffmann on the architectonic complex of pious institutions founded by Rašīd al-Dīn Hamadānī in the city of Tabriz and known as the *Rab'-i Rašīdī*. The article places special emphasis on the role of the charitable foundation as a way to ensure the *memoria* of the donor and as a representation of the wealth and honour of the founder. The second article in this section by Nourane Ben Azzouna also discusses Rašīd al-Dīn, but focuses on the production of manuscripts he funded. Using a quantitative approach in her study, Ben Azzouna explores different stages in the production of manuscripts in Tabriz under the direction and patronage of the Hamadani vizier. She suggests that there might be a relationship between the increase in manuscript production and Rašīd's political ascension, while pointing out the advantages that this book production could have had as a means for political propaganda. The two remaining articles in this section deal with astronomy and intellectual production in and around Tabriz, and the possibilities offered by the Mongol-funded observatory of Maragah. Connected to the sphere of influence of Rašīd al-Dīn, the article by Robert Morrison analyses a work composed by 'Aḍūd al-Dīn al-Īǰī (d. 1355), a scholar of *kalām* whose work has attracted the attention of modern scholarship due to its particular use of Aristotelian philosophy. The article locates this author in the philosophical debates between *kalām* and science, suggesting that Īǰī's work is not the sole representation of these debates, but that it "represents a point in the debate", highlighting the high level of intellectual production generated in Ilkhanid lands. While Morrison looks at astronomy from a philosophical point of view, the article by F. Jamil Ragep that follows it traces the transmission of astronomical knowledge from Tabriz to Byzantium by looking at interest among Greek scholars in the

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empirical information obtained from the astronomical observations carried out at the Observatory in Maragah.

The third and final section of the book includes five articles that look at Tabriz from a different perspective than the previous ones. While the articles mentioned above focus on intellectual or literary production in the area, this section opens with a contribution by Johannes Preiser-Kepeller that analyses the central place that Tabriz occupied in the *imaginarium* of European Christian communities and looks at how the city became a nodal point for western merchants and clerics from the thirteenth century on. Providing a number of maps and diagrams, the article suggests that the mercantile routes existing between Tabriz and Europe were used to connect Christian communities in the Middle East, Europe and the Far East, with Tabriz at the centre of this 'mental map'. Continuing with the analysis of Tabriz's commercial importance, Patrick Wing offers an overview of the literature on the topic. He discusses different works on the role of Tabriz as a centre of commerce and economic growth under the Mongols, arguing that its geographical location both in an area suitable for nomadic pastoralism and at a crossroads of international trade explains the prominence acquired by the city, especially during the Mongol domination of Iran. Sheila Blair also places Tabriz as the centre of the scene in her analysis of the material culture of the city not only during the Mongol domination but also into the Timurid period. By looking at manuscript illustration, textiles and architecture, she argues that the city became an international emporium interconnected across Eurasia; it was a city where cultural interaction occurred not only between the nomadic rulers of Tabriz and their allies but also with areas considered enemies, such as those under Mamluk control or European Kingdoms, suggesting that cultural interaction went beyond political confrontation. The final two articles in the volume deal mostly with the city of Tabriz in the fifteenth century under the Timurid and Aqquyunlu dynasties. Joachim Gierlichs focuses on the specific production of woodcarvings by Tabrizi masters, while the final article by Ertuğul Ökten investigates the scarce evidence available for the patronage of religious building in Tabriz in the fifteenth century.

The volume does not attempt to cover all aspects of intellectual activity in Tabriz in this period, a task which would be impossible to accomplish in a single volume. However, it fulfils expectations by contributing to a better understanding of the political, economic and intellectual life of Tabriz from the arrival of the Chinggissid rulers to Iran in the mid thirteenth century until the region became a disputed zone after the consolidation of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires in the sixteenth century. Making the city of Tabriz the focal point of the book is a good idea; it helps to maintain argumentative coherence in a book that needs to cover a variety of topics within a relatively long time frame. As a whole, patronage emerges as another interesting factor in explaining the dynamics of politics and intellectual production in the city during this period. The relevance of royal and individual patronage, and indeed the lack thereof, in shaping the intellectual activity of premodern Tabriz is another contribution of this volume, which invites scholars in the field to pursue further research on this topic in other areas of the Islamicate world.

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